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LEBANON

Palestine Liberation Army troops, under the direction of the tripartite truce committee, reportedly have gained control of Beirut's commercial district and have begun taking up positions in the disputed area between Muslim and Christian sections of the city. Sporadic fighting continues in the suburbs and in several areas in northern and southern Lebanon.

In addition to the PLA troops operating in Beirut, a 500-man special force drawn mainly from Fatah is being used against Muslim and Palestinian truce violators. The force has met stiff resistance from Iraqi-sponsored fedayeen and forces led by Muslim radical Ibrahim Qulaylat, one of Kamal Jumblatt's chief allies.

The main problem, however, is the continuing exchange of artillery fire between the Christian and Muslim suburbs of Beirut. Under the terms of the truce, Palestinian forces are not permitted to enter Christian areas and, therefore, hold out little hope of stopping the shelling.

According to Beirut press dispatches, President Franjiah's representatives returned from Damascus yesterday with assurances from the Syrians that President Asad has made no secret commitments to the Palestinians. US embassy sources believe this will clear the way for Franjiah to sign the constitutional amendment that will permit the election of his successor. These sources suggest he will deliver a signed copy of the document to parliament today. The Christians may still insist, however, that the elections await an improvement in security.

Leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt is keeping up the pressure on the Christians with more threats to set up a rival Muslim government if Franjiah continues to delay. Jumblatt has set May 2 as the final deadline for Franjiah's departure.

In the south, a battle between a small group of soldiers from the renegade Muslim army and about 50 Christian troops based at Qulayah reportedly drew fire from the Israelis. Qulayah is only four kilometers from the Israeli border. The leader of the rebel Muslim troops had been cooperating with Syrian efforts to enforce the cease-fire, but apparently triggered the fighting when he refused to allow food supplies to reach the Christian outpost.

The Syrian forces that were sent to Lebanon's eastern border area two weeks ago appear to be prepared to stay indefinitely if necessary. Syrian forces on the Syrian side of the border have set up normal field camps, and have established a regular logistic system to Damascus.

Most Syrian forces in eastern Lebanon are remaining in place, but are no longer patrolling the Bekaa Valley. Relations between the Syrians and the local populace are poor.

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USSR

Most of Yury Andropov's Lenin birthday speech yesterday was devoted to Soviet domestic matters, but his remarks on those issues generally were pro forma. His comments on relations with the US, however, reflected concern over a possible deterioration in bilateral ties.

The foreign policy portion of the speech concentrated on two of Moscow's current preoccupations: the status of "detente" and the ideological challenge posed by the West European communists. Andropov's rhetoric was relatively restrained and his formulations for the most part conventional, but his criticism of the "peace through strength" policy is Moscow's most authoritative to date.

Citing General Secretary Brezhnev's report to the party congress, Andropov stated unequivocally that the USSR would continue to work for a "relaxation of tension." He also reiterated a refrain common in Soviet rhetoric, particularly since Angola became an issue, that the ideological struggle inevitably continues under conditions of a relaxation of tension. He did not go so far as to say, as other Soviets have, that the ideological struggle will intensify.

Andropov never mentioned President Ford, but had unkind words for the "peace through strength" formulation, which Andropov said was an echo of the cold war. He made clear, again without explicitly saying so, that the Soviets regard some of the statements emanating from the US as election-year politics. In keeping with recent Soviet coverage of the US scene, Andropov asserted that such "rhetoric" could have harmful consequences.

In raising the possibility not only of a delay in the process of relaxing tension but also of some "slipping back," Andropov was more pessimistic than either Brezhnev had been in his report to the party congress, or Politburo member Suslov had been in his Lenin anniversary speech last year. Andropov argued that delay or slippage, however temporary, could lead to a waste of material resources for "no purpose." This may have been an allusion to the strategic arms limitations talks.

These passages seem directed to Washington and are reminiscent of statements made last summer by Brezhnev in urging US leaders to be more openly supportive of "detente." Andropov's reference to the inevitability of the deepening of detente, "irrespective of developments in the near future," sounds as if the Soviets anticipate tougher days ahead.

In speaking of the international communist movement, Andropov included some passages intended to be conciliatory to the independent-minded West

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European parties. He argued that the Soviet party is not imposing its revolutionary experience on other parties, but is pleased when they use it "creatively" and add their own "tactical methods" and "new approaches" to solving problems.

At the same time, he said there are still some fundamental Leninist laws that are ineluctable. One of these is that socialist transformation "requires" the establishment of government by the working class—that is, a communist-led government. In a separate passage, Andropov made a strong defense of the dictatorship of the proletariat, a fundamental Leninist precept recently abandoned by the French Communist Party.

Andropov touched as well on proletarian internationalism, but buried that reference in the context of support for "national liberation" struggles. This is part of a continuing Soviet effort to find a definition of the phrase that can satisfy various parties. Andropov, in effect, was pointing to broad support by the left for the Popular Movement in Angola as an example of what—at least in part—proletarian internationalism means. [REDACTED]

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PORTUGAL

Portugal's political parties, concerned that two years of non-stop political activity may have turned off large numbers of voters, are engaged in an eleventh-hour effort to overcome voter apathy before the legislative assembly election on Sunday. The ruling Revolutionary Council has also issued an appeal for a strong voter turnout.

Parties of both the left and right—which end their campaigns this evening—as well as many political observers in Lisbon, believe that abstentions will be significantly higher than last year, when 91.7 percent of registered voters participated in the highly charged constituent assembly elections.

The centrist Popular Democratic Party and the center-right Social Democratic Center are worried that many of those who abstain will be conservatives who are fed up with Portugal's "revolution of the carnations."

Communist concern that some of the party's moderate left-wing supporters might be among the no-shows was indicated in recent remarks by party leader Alvaro Cunhal, who has been emphasizing that "no good democrat should abstain."

Faced with the prospect of his party being excluded from the new government to be formed this summer, Cunhal continues to press for a Communist-Socialist coalition. Cunhal on Wednesday threatened to withhold Communist support from the Socialists in parliament if they attempt to form a minority government on their own.

The Socialists, who have steadfastly rebuffed overtures by the Communists, ignored the latest Communist threat, saying that any alliance with the Communists would be a betrayal of the Portuguese people. The Socialists have also complained about a campaign sticker cleverly contrived by the Communists that shows a worker's clenched fist, the Socialists' emblem, holding the Communist hammer and sickle and featuring an appeal for unity between the two parties.

Meanwhile, several military candidates are already jockeying for position in the important follow-up presidential election, which will be held in two months. Prime Minister Azevedo recently reaffirmed his intention to be a candidate and issued a thinly disguised appeal to the parties for their support.

The apparent front-runner, northern military region commander Pires Veloso, is planning an election gambit of his own—a trip to the US early next month to meet with congressmen and leaders of the Portuguese immigrant community. Labor

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Minister Tomas Rosa, a member of the powerful "operational" wing of the military, claimed on Tuesday that the military is beginning to coalesce around Pires Veloso's candidacy. He already enjoys some support in all three of the major non-Communist parties.

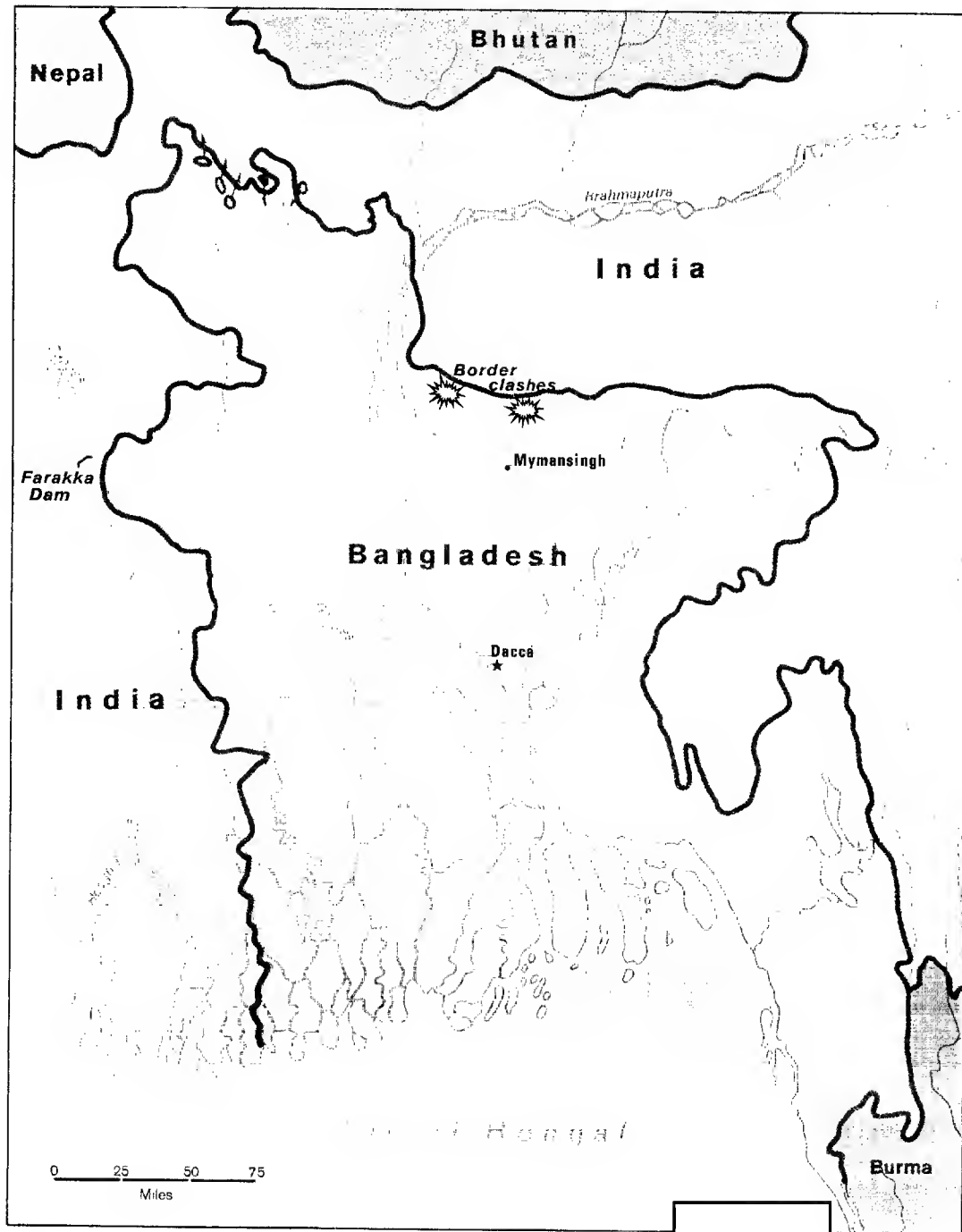
Lisbon radio announced yesterday that a far left splinter party has endorsed former security chief Otelo de Carvalho for president. Carvalho has become a political "unperson" following his implication in the abortive November rebellion, and his candidacy is not likely to be taken seriously. [REDACTED]

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INDIA-BANGLADESH

Relations between New Delhi and Dacca, sour since a military coup in Dacca last August in which pro-Indian president Mujib was killed, have deteriorated further this week, following several border clashes and continuing protests by the Bangladesh government over India's diversion of Ganges River water near the border.

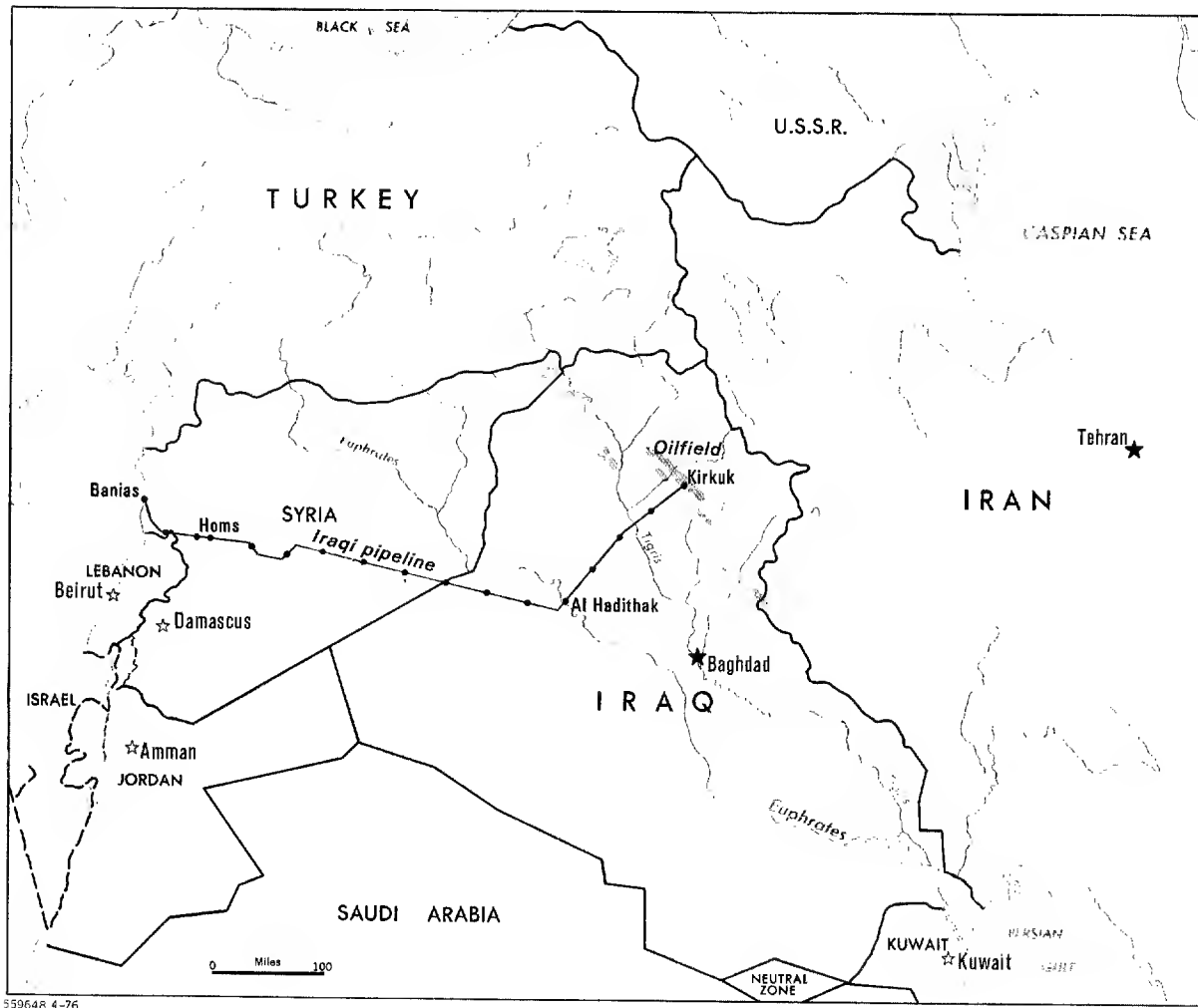
Both governments lodged protests this week blaming the other for several mortar and gunfire exchanges that occurred along a sector of the northern border of Bangladesh. Dacca has also claimed that India is supporting insurgents opposed to the present regime in Bangladesh who have been active in the border areas. The clashes may have been triggered by Bengalee troops firing on the Indians in the mistaken belief they were insurgents approaching the border.

The two countries are also bickering over alleged withdrawals by India of more than its fair share of water from the Ganges at the Farakka dam site. The Indians say they are willing to discuss a more equitable division only of the water taken during the yearly spring lean period. Bangladesh wants to talk about withdrawals for the entire year.

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IRAQ-SYRIA

Iraq cut off oil to Syria on April 9, forcing Damascus to seek high-quality crude elsewhere to meet its commercial and military needs. The Syrians have temporarily curtailed or suspended domestic air service to conserve aviation fuel and have approached the Saudis to help make up the shortfall.

The transit pipeline agreement between Iraq and Syria, under which Syria had been buying 50,000 barrels per day of Iraqi crude at a price of only \$3.00 per barrel, expired last December. Since then, differences over the future sale price of Iraqi oil and over Syrian transit fees have prevented Damascus and Baghdad from concluding a new agreement.

Syria depends exclusively on Iraq for light crude. Syria earned some \$150 million last year in transit fees on the oil passing from Iraq through Syria.

Damascus could buy light crude from other suppliers—at world market prices of more than \$11.50 per barrel. Syria would also incur additional transport costs in getting the oil to the Homs refinery. If Damascus purchases light crude from Saudi Arabia, the Saudis might provide some concessions, but Syria would still have to pay substantially more than under the Iraqi terms in effect until last December.

The Iraqi decision to cut off the oil flow may have been in response to Syrian efforts to remove more from the pipeline than allowed under the old agreement.

The move may also have been timed to hamper Syria's efforts to resolve the Lebanese crisis. The Iraqis have supplied arms and money to fedayeen radicals in an effort to undercut Syrian mediation efforts there and have been vocal in their criticism of recent Syrian policies. Baghdad would like to see a Syrian failure in Lebanon lead to the overthrow of President Asad.

The two rival Baathist regimes of Syria and Iraq have been bickering more or less openly since last spring when Damascus cut off water to Iraq from the Euphrates River after Iraq allegedly meddled in Syria's internal affairs. If Syria decides to put pressure on Iraq to resume oil shipments, cutting the flow of water again would be the most obvious and effective way of doing so.



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USSR-TUNISIA

Moscow and Tunis have announced the signing of an agreement extending substantial new Soviet economic aid to Tunisia.

The \$76-million agreement gives concrete form to earlier discussions between Tunisian President Bourguiba and Soviet Premier Kosygin, according to a joint communique of April 15. It is not clear how much of this amount is new aid. It may incorporate some \$13 million in unused credits from an earlier agreement. The new agreement makes the USSR one of Tunisia's major aid donors.

The aid will reportedly be used to develop and distribute northern water resources and further develop the Soviet-built Tunisian National Engineering School. Both projects are important to Tunisia's continued economic progress.

The Soviets probably hope to take advantage of Tunisia's strategic location on the narrow western Mediterranean. Over the past two years, and as recently as last month, the Soviets have applied political pressure in attempting to increase their access to Tunisian ports—particularly Bizerte and Tunis—for naval visits.

Tunisia has in the past objected to Soviet violations of its territorial waters, and has so far refused to be pressured into granting access to its ports.

The new aid agreement may be intended to gain additional leverage for the Soviets. Tunis, however, is not likely to alter its essentially pro-Western stance in the near future.

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PANAMA

Panama's reaction to campaign statements by US presidential candidates on the canal negotiations has been generally low-key.

The government has begun to comment on the negotiations because of its perceived need to react to canal-oriented campaign statements by US presidential hopefuls as well as the need to show some progress on negotiations during what the Panamanian public sees as a slack period in the talks with the US.

The naming of a new foreign minister and chief negotiator on April 1 also brought the canal issue back into the limelight. According to US officials, the new foreign minister and de facto chief negotiator, Aquilino Boyd, has been cooperative. In a speech on April 19, Boyd described Panama's relations with the US as "very special" and was optimistic that a new treaty with Washington would be concluded. Boyd indicated, however, that the new canal treaty would not extend beyond the year 2000. Public references to the year 2000 over the last several months will make it extremely difficult for Panama to deviate from its announced negotiating schedule.

Most of the political statements in the US on the canal issue have generally been accepted in Panama as part of the US election process. Nonetheless, one candidate's recent uncomplimentary description of General Torrijos as a "tinhorn dictator" and criticism of the negotiations have drawn an ascerbic reaction.

In a lengthy interview with a US correspondent on April 5, Torrijos rejected former governor Reagan's contentions that the canal was US territory and said the governor's statements aided the extreme left in Panama. Torrijos also alluded to the possibility of student violence and repeated his now traditional reference to violent alternatives if peaceful negotiations are not successful.

Torrijos remarked that 1977 would mark the limit of Panama's patience on securing a new treaty. The press has also echoed the reference to 1977. Thus, while Torrijos continues to have faith in US intentions to conclude a new agreement and retains an attitude of forbearance for the vicissitudes of the US electoral process, he apparently wants to continue pressuring the US.

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CHILE

Left-wing exiles of Salvador Allende's former Popular Unity government plan to convene in Mexico in mid-May in an effort to create a unified Chilean revolutionary movement. The more immediate objective, however, may be to consider ways to embarrass the Chilean government when it hosts the OAS General Assembly meeting in early June.

According to an interview with Allende's former foreign minister, Clodomiro Almeyda, the disparate members of the leftist political parties intend to forge a common program of resistance to the current military regime. The parties that made up the Popular Unity government are now banned in Chile, and their leaders are scattered around the globe. Almeyda glossed over the divergence of views among those who oppose President Pinochet, contending that "there are no deep differences at present," but added that ways must be found "to structure unity."

Past efforts to organize a broad opposition front have faltered because of the same rivalries and quarreling that weakened Allende's administration. Whatever successes have been achieved by the exiles seem limited to promoting international censure of the junta.

The exiles probably hope to attract dissident leftists of the Christian Democratic Party, who have gradually become disillusioned with the growing atrophy of their party and expect no early end to the political moratorium imposed by the military government. The exiles apparently are also counting on picking up the pieces of the decimated extremist Movement of the Revolutionary Left, which has been the major target of Chilean security forces.

Carlos Altamirano, secretary general of Allende's Socialist Party [redacted] is already in Mexico to commemorate the founding of the party. His presence is likely to put another obstacle in the way of any unifying trend.

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MEXICO

The Echeverria government, already under fire from the business community over a controversial draft law on urban land use, is now being challenged by angry campesinos demanding more land from rich estate holders.

Armed campesinos have occupied private lands in several states in the past month. In the agriculturally rich Yaqui Valley area in the state of Sonora, over 3,000 squatters have held a 400-hectare plot since April 3. Landowners in Sonora, where large and highly productive privately owned farms predominate, fear that the reluctance of authorities to dislodge these squatters will encourage others.

At the root of the problem is Mexico's burgeoning population growth, which is outstripping the government's ability to provide jobs or productive farm lands for the campesinos. With over 3 million campesinos demanding lands that they have been led to believe belong to them, the government is under increasing pressure to act, even though land grants would have to be made at the expense of the more efficient private producers.

The government is trying to stave off a major crisis, as it has in the past, by sending cabinet ministers to the scene to make promises to the campesinos and to relieve the fears of landowners. This time, however, officials are concerned that the practice of buying time is wearing thin and that serious violence is a real possibility.

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VIETNAM

Vietnamese in the North and South will go to the polls Sunday to elect a new national assembly, which will then formally approve a new unified government of Vietnam including representatives from both zones. The new assembly will probably draft a new constitution, and adopt a new flag and national anthem by early this summer.

There is some concern among communist officials that dissidents in the South will try to disrupt the election with terrorist acts and by encouraging the voters to invalidate their ballots. Strict security measures are being enforced in most of the southern provinces, and rallies and other large meetings have been prohibited in the South until after the election.

With the establishment of a formally unified government, the Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government will be eliminated, and with it the pretense of an independent southern regime that has been maintained since the military take-over last April. North Vietnam already has notified foreign representatives that the new capital will be Hanoi and that embassies and other official offices will be permitted only in that city.

Foreign access to Vietnam will be permitted only through Hanoi. Although travel to the South will be allowed, no consular or other foreign offices will be permitted in Saigon. All representatives of Western news organizations will be required to leave Saigon shortly after the election.

Formal political unification is likely to be followed by new policy guidelines from the party on economic and social unification. Hanoi has conceded that the integration of the South with the socialist North poses unique problems, and there apparently is some debate over how rapidly this process should be completed. A recent editorial in Hanoi's theoretical journal underscores the difficulty of establishing socialism in the South and maintains that it should be implemented gradually.

Other official commentary in the party and army journals, however, has advocated a more rapid transition, suggesting that firm decisions have not yet been made. These are likely to emerge from the Fourth Party Congress, which has been tentatively scheduled for sometime this year. [REDACTED]

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MALAYSIA

Kuala Lumpur has launched a major assault against a communist base camp on the Thai border. Between April 16 and 19, over 50 sorties were directed against the camp, with Malaysian F-5E aircraft being used in a combat role for the first time. An assault on April 17 failed; a second assault was to have been mounted on April 21. Some 1,600 ground troops were to be involved in the operation.

The communist camp, reportedly well-fortified and capable of accommodating 200 to 300 people, is very near the Thai border. It is likely that some air strikes have been flown inside Thailand. There is no evidence, however, that Thai ground troops have moved to the border to block a retreat by the communists into Thailand.

More operations can be expected as new camps are discovered. The problem posed by Thai border sanctuaries, however, will not be solved until the Thais can be persuaded to cooperate more closely with Malaysian officials. Given the current mutual distrust of local commanders, such cooperation is not expected. [REDACTED]

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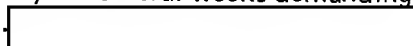
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FOR THE RECORD



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ETHIOPIA: Troops yesterday restored order in Addis Ababa after several hours of demonstrations against the policies of the ruling military council. One person was killed and at least two wounded; a number of arrests also were made. Some of the demonstrators were workers demanding the right to form their own unions. Students, who have demonstrated almost daily for several weeks demanding a return to civilian rule, were probably also involved.



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